

that same time, the amount of acres burned has increased from 2.7 million acres in 1986 to 4.3 million acres in 2013.

In many parts of the U.S., fire seasons are now 60 to 80 days longer compared to three decades ago and in some places like Southern California, the fire season never ends.

This is leading to seasonal firefighters being hired several months earlier than normal and federal agencies spending more to make sure our firefighters are prepared and have the necessary resources available for the entire year.

So far this year, California has experienced a 35 percent increase in fire activity and a 16 percent increase in acres burned over an average year. These alarming statistics translate to more than 4,000 wildfires in my State already that have burned more than 52,000 acres since the beginning of the year.

Right now, brave firefighters in California are battling five different large fires. The largest is the Sand Fire, which has burned over 4,000 acres east of Sacramento. This fire has already destroyed 19 homes.

Although it has already been an unprecedented fire season in California, we are not at all out of danger yet as the significant wildland fire potential remains above normal for most of the State through October of this year. It is also above normal in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, and parts of Arizona.

Adding to the difficulty of battling these enormous fires is the constrained fire suppression budget we are currently operating under.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior announced that wildfire-fighting costs this summer are projected to run about \$400 million over budget.

In fact, since 2002, the United States has overspent its wildfire suppression budget every year except one—and in three of those years, went over the suppression budget by nearly \$1 billion. This chronic underfunding of our fire-fighting accounts cannot continue.

When we fail to budget for fire suppression, the Forest Service and the Department of Interior are forced to transfer money from fire prevention accounts to make up the difference. That makes no sense!

We are taking money from the very programs that help reduce the threat of wildfires—such as hazardous fuel removal programs.

In my State, plans to remove dry brush and dead trees in the Tahoe National Forest and the Plumas National Forest have been delayed because wildfire prevention funding is not available.

The President's supplemental request not only adds funding for fire suppression during this fiscal year, it solves the problem in the future by creating a Wildfire Suppression Cap Adjustment so that extraordinary fire costs are

treated in the same way as destructive hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes are funded.

This means that money to fight the largest fires would not be subject to discretionary budget caps much like FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund.

As our fire seasons become longer, hotter, and endanger more communities, we must act now to change how wildfire suppression is funded so that we can reduce fire risk and increase the resiliency of the Nation's public lands, forests, and the surrounding communities.

I urge my colleagues to support this emergency supplemental funding and address the growing crisis of wildfires.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

KELLOGG-HUBBARD LIBRARY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, every time I go by the children's library at Kellogg-Hubbard Library in my hometown of Montpelier, VT, it brings back happy memories. I would like to have printed in the RECORD an article I wrote about the library and its wonderful librarian, Miss Holbrook.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Times Argus, June 13, 1996]

MONTPELIER BOY REALIZES MISS HOLBROOK WAS RIGHT

(By Patrick Leahy)

The 100th anniversary of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library triggers memories for all of us who have lived in Montpelier. And they are great memories.

While I was growing up, Montpelier did not have television. We children did not have the advantage of cable TV with 10 channels giving us the opportunity to buy things we didn't need and would never use or another 10 offering blessings or redemptions for an adequate contribution.

Deprived as we were, we made do with the Lone Ranger and Inner Sanctum on the radio and Saturday's serials at the Strand Theater on Main Street. For a few minutes on Saturday afternoon, we could watch Hopalong Cassidy, Tarzan, Flash Gordon, Jungle Jim or Batman face death-defying predicaments that would guarantee you would be back the next Saturday, 14 cents in hand, to see how they survived (and I recall they always did).

Having exhausted radio, Saturday matinees, the latest comic books (I had a favor-

ite) and childhood games and chores, we were left to our own imagination.

That was the best part.

We were a generation who let the genies of our imagination out of the bottle by reading. Then, as now, reading was one of my greatest pleasures.

My parents had owned the Waterbury Record Weekly newspaper and then started the Leahy Press in Montpelier, which they ran until selling it at their retirement. The Leahy family was at home with the printed word and I learned to read early in life.

At 5 years old I went down the stairs of the Kellogg-Hubbard Children's Library, and the years that followed provided some of the most important experiences of my life.

In the '40s and '50s, the Kellogg-Hubbard was blessed with a white-haired children's librarian named Miss Holbrook. Her vocation in life had to be to help children read and to make reading enjoyable. She succeeded more than even she might have dreamed.

She had the key to unlocking our imagination.

With my parents' encouragement, the Kellogg-Hubbard was a regular stop every afternoon as I left school. On any day I had two or three books checked out. My sister Mary, brother John and I read constantly.

In my years as U.S. senator, it seems I never traveled so far or experienced so much as I did as a child in Montpelier with daily visits to the library. With Miss Holbrook's encouragement I had read most of Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson in the early part of grade school.

To this day, I remember sitting in our home at 136 State St. reading Treasure Island on a Saturday afternoon filled with summer storms. I knew I heard the tap, tap, tap of the blind man's stick coming down State Street and I remember the great relief of seeing my mother and father returning from visiting my grandparents in South Ryegate.

Miss Holbrook was right. A good and an active imagination creates its own reality.

In my profession, I read computer messages, briefing papers, constituent letters, legislation and briefings, the Congressional Record—and an occasional book for pleasure—in all, the equivalent of a full-length book each day.

Interesting as all this is, and owing much of my life to those earlier experiences at the library, the truest reading pleasure was then. I worry that so many children today miss what our libraries offer.

During the past few years I have had many of my photographs published. DC Comics and Warner Brothers have also asked me to write for Batman or do voice-overs on their TV series. In each case, I have asked them to send my payment to the Kellogg-Hubbard Library to buy books for the Children's Library.

It is my way of saying: "Thank you, Miss Holbrook."

RECOGNIZING RONALD McDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to commemorate the 30th anniversary for two excellent charities in my home State of Kentucky, the Ronald McDonald House Charities. The Ronald McDonald House Charities of Kentuckiana in Louisville and the Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Bluegrass in Lexington both first opened their doors to needy families in 1984.

Since then, each house has served more than 25,000 families. In the last